Nixon Picks Man For Justice No. 2

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By Kirk Scarfenberg
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MIAMI, June 19—President Nixon will nominate Ralph E. Erickson, presently an assistant attorney general for the No. 2 job in the Justice Department, the Florida White House announced today.

Erickson, 43, will replace Richard Kleindienst as deputy attorney general. Kleindienst, after prolonged and heated confirmation hearings, was appointed Attorney General earlier this month.

Some observers had thought the administration would choose a replacement from outside the Justice Department to assure that the Senate Judiciary Committee would not use his confirmation hearing to reopen its investigation of the administration's role in the ITT affair. It was this issue that stalled Kleindienst's confirmation.

May Plead Ignorance

However, as assistant attorney general for the Justice Department's office of legal counsel, Erickson may be able to plead ignorance of the whole matter. Employees of the office are frequently referred to as the department's lawyers' lawyers. They do not usually get involved in political considerations but concentrate on preparing briefs and legal documents.

In his new job as deputy attorney general, Erickson would be responsible for reviewing possible candidates for federal judgeships and for handling the Justice Department's relations with Congress.

He has had experience in the latter area, he helped draft an executive order issued by the President designed to reform the manner in which federal documents are classified and declassified and testified on the matter before Congress last March.

Erickson has been serving as the head of the Office of Legal Counsel since January. He succeeded William H. Rehnquist who was appointed a justice of the U.S. Supreme Court.

Served in HUD

Prior to that, Erickson was a deputy in the office and director of the Office of Community Goals and Standards in the Department of Housing and Urban Development.

Like Kleindienst, Erickson, a McLean, Va., resident, is a graduate of the Harvard Law School. Before joining the federal government he was a partner in a Los Angeles law firm.

His new post would pay $40,000 annually.

In other announcements, White House Press Secretary Ronald L. Ziegler said former Treasury Secretary John Connally, now on a foreign tour, would alter his announced plans and visit Afghanistan in early July.

Ziegler said the decision was made during a telephone conversation with the President Sunday night. He said both Mr. Nixon and Connally, now is Australia, were concerned with the widespread starvation in parts of Afghanistan caused by drought.

RALPH E. ERICKSON
. . . President's choice